

PEI man always on the go

SITE MOBILIZATION will probably get under way before the end of the year on the long-proposed 14 km tunnel or bridge between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island provided Ottawa selects a design-build consortium this fall. The current price tag is in the \$600 million to \$700 million range, meaning the consortium could be carrying finance charges as high as \$1.5 million a week before any revenue comes in from paying travellers. It would therefore not be surprising to learn that the five-year construction program is whittled down to four.

It had been originally proposed that work would start on the New Brunswick side since most of the raw materials and equipment will come from the mainland. But because of the need to get the crossing built as quickly as possible, some people are looking at starting it at both ends. On the island, that would be near Borden, and on the mainland, near Cape Tormentine.

Harry MacLauchlan, a well-known contractor-entrepreneur on the island, is already talking to one or two of the joint venture consortiums. He is hopeful that his 17-year-old contracting business, Island Coastal Services Ltd., Charlottetown, will get involved in building the approaches for the crossing.

"I'm quite in favour of the link; it's one of the greatest things that could ever happen to Prince Edward Island and to the rest of Canada," he says. MacLauchlan firmly believes that the link will improve the island's three basic industries: agriculture, fishing and tourism. "In this day and age, you've got to get better communication with the mainland. It's a shame for the rest of Canada if we don't open it up."

The fixed link will be a private development, starting with the design, then construction and finally the operation and maintenance of the link over a 35-year period. MacLauchlan, 61, hopes the link can be developed privately; he has no patience for government-supported endeavours. "There are too many government-

sponsored projects all across Canada, in my opinion," he says. "Leave it to private enterprise to develop the country. Everybody would be better off."

"There are too many of these [government] grants and subsidies. The projects would be done better [on time and on budget] by private enterprise and there would be more people working." MacLauchlan has never been opposed to mainland developers coming to the island. "I've got no problem with outsiders coming in here with their own money. But those you've had to pay to come in, you're better not to see them."

MacLauchlan and his wife, Marjorie (who has worked with him for 38 years), live in Stanhope, a community of about 500 year-round residents roughly 20 km north of Charlottetown. He knows every

roadbuilding company.

In 1971, at the age of 45, he sold the operation to a partner and launched his current business, Island Coastal. Since then, he has diversified into many island businesses: fishing, lumber, tourism, property development, golf course management and cable TV. However, having been involved in so many business enterprises doesn't mean retirement is near for a man who works six days a week: "I've got no plans for that, no time even to think about it. There are a lot of things I'm not into yet."

MacLauchlan says young people who want to start their own construction business today have quite a challenge ahead of them because half of what they make will go into government coffers. "There's money to be made in construction, but it's

much tougher now to get going. When I started, it didn't take very many dollars to get started. You could go from hand to mouth and spend as you went. After you made a dollar, you had that dollar to re-invest. I think it's easier to make money today, but they [the government] take half of it from you if you make it.

"We're paying too much in and getting nothing in return. We should be putting

that money back in. We're getting only 25 cents on each dollar we're pumping out. Give the work to the private developer to oversee and manage the work and cut out this government interference."

The executive decisions of Island Coastal are shared by Harry MacLauchlan as president and Blair MacLauchlan, his manager and nephew. In 1979, Blair MacLauchlan was president of the Prince Edward Island Road Builders Association; currently he is back in office as vice-president. He is also the honorary treasurer of the Canadian Construction Association. Blair MacLauchlan says about 90% of Island Coastal's business is in contracting work, which includes a rental fleet of 50 pieces of equipment. During the summer, Island Coastal employs 150 people, with 80 or 90 of those full-time. ♦



Harry MacLauchlan

house, tree and bush in Stanhope, where he was born in 1926. He says his side of the family goes back to 1770, when the first MacLauchlan landed on the island from Scotland. "He was one of the first settlers to come ashore here."

MacLauchlan has two sons; one works for Island Coastal in construction, and the other teaches law at Dalhousie University in Halifax. He also has three daughters; one is a United Church minister in Saskatchewan, another is married to a Charlottetown lawyer and the third is attending Mount Allison University in Sackville.

In 1946, MacLauchlan started his career by getting involved in the grocery business. Eight years later, he started Island Excavators Ltd., an earthmoving and